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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001770

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#) [UG](#)

SUBJECT: DRC, UGANDA AGREE TO COORDINATED PATROLS AGAINST LRA ELEMENTS

REF: STATE 195476

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

11. (C) Summary. In a joint communique following an October 18 bilateral meeting, the GDRC and the GOU agreed to coordinate their patrols against suspected Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) forces operating in DRC. Such efforts are to be conducted within each country's respective borders, as neither side agreed to have the other's armed forces cross the border. Despite this agreement, tensions between GDRC and GOU representatives are still evident. In addition, MONUC will be increasing its troop presence in Aba to deal with the LRA. End Summary.

12. (C) PolOff spoke October 21 with Lt. Col. Alex Baring, Senior Military Adviser to MONUC's Force Commander, regarding the joint communique. Baring said the announced cooperation was established to deal specifically with LRA forces in the DRC and would operate separately from other joint DRC-Uganda verification missions. Ugandan representatives reportedly said they were not ready to participate in the missions immediately, so the operations have been postponed until the following week. Baring said the Ugandans did not explain if the delay was due to logistical or political concerns. We will follow and report on when these missions begin.

13. (C) Baring said teams would conduct coordinated efforts on each side of the border and each country would remain within its own territory. Moreover, the coordination would consist only of the sharing of intelligence, not joint or coordinated military operations. Baring said the idea of joint DRC-Ugandan operational patrols was a non-starter for the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC), and would not be considered. FARDC representatives added during the meeting it would be unacceptable for Ugandan troops to act on DRC territory in any manner.

14. (C) MONUC Force Commander Lt. Gen. Babacar Gaye told the Ambassador October 24 that the possibility of joint reconnaissance missions had been considered, similar to those already conducted by the DRC/Ugandan joint verification mechanism agreement in place. Any encounter with LRA forces, however, could easily result in an exchange of fire, making almost any mission in the area a potential operational mission. For the GDRC, the idea of UPDF troops entering into active fire operations inside DRC territory is a problem. Therefore the deal that was struck and announced limits the concept to operational coordination, with respective forces staying on opposite sides of the border.

15. (C) There is presently a sizable contingent of FARDC troops near the DRC-Sudan border to search out LRA forces. MONUC is still moving FARDC troops to Aba. Gen Gaye, however, told the Ambassador that only a few elements remain in Aru, and that the FARDC has close to two full battalions already in place in the Aba area. (Note: MONUC's mandate restricts its forces to DRC territory, thereby prohibiting it from sending troops into Sudan. End note.)

16. (C) Gaye also told Ambassador that MONUC is taking several steps with regard to the LRA issue. Gaye said MONUC will have military observers stationed full-time in Aru. Presently, the observers are based in Aru and go back and forth between the two locations. Gaye said he wants the observers in Aba to stay. Gaye told Ambassador MONUC also wants to send an air controller to Aba to assist with air support operations. In addition, MONUC now plans to establish refueling capabilities in Aba so air operations originating there can have operational capacity into the Garamba Park area. (Note: The operational range with fuel from Aru means MONUC helicopters at best have a very restricted operational capability as far as Garamba Park. End note.) Gaye also said MONUC will be sending two MONUC companies to Aba, and has encouraged FARDC Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Kisempia to travel to the area. Gaye said he would accompany Kisempia, or more likely Kisempia's number two as his designated representative, to Aba as soon as possible. MONUC is pressing the GDRC for confirmation so that the travel can take place ASAP. In response to the Ambassador's questions, Gaye declined providing a specific deployment timetable for the various MONUC deployments, but did say that he is pressing to get them done as quickly as possible. Both Gaye and SRSB Bill Swing in an earlier telephone conversation confirmed to the Ambassador that they were aware of reports that Otiti has crossed back into DRC

territory, but indicated that they did not yet have any confirmation of this.

17. (C) On the issue of Ituri, the communique stated a need for MONUC to develop adequate aerial and marine surveillance to help prevent cross-border incursions. Baring said that proposal was dismissed by MONUC as "rather fanciful," since MONUC has limited intelligence collection assets and is already hard-pressed to provide adequate logistics and security support for the DRC election preparations now underway.

18. (C) Baring added that Ugandan representatives also accused the FARDC of recently providing logistical support and food to LRA forces reportedly in DRC. Such assistance, Uganda claimed, was aimed at encouraging the LRA to leave DRC territory. According to Baring, the FARDC strongly denied the allegations.

19. (C) Baring said the bilateral talks between DRC and Uganda went well, as demonstrated by the communique's description of the meeting as "free, frank and cordial." He added, however, that such cooperation was only possible because of MONUC's presence as a facilitator during the meetings. Otherwise, Baring said, there would not have been much progress between the two sides had they been left to their own devices.

10. (C) Comment: Despite the agreements reached between DRC and Uganda in this bilateral meeting, the suspected presence of LRA forces in the DRC contributes to the tension between the two countries, especially since Kampala does not see the FARDC to be taking adequate measures against the LRA. The GDRC and MONUC are aware of reports that LRA leader Vincent Otti has crossed back into DRC, but neither has any specific location information at this point. In addition, allegations by Uganda of outright FARDC assistance to the LRA only serve to raise suspicions on the DRC side, thereby making them less willing to work jointly with the Ugandans. While the measures announced in the joint communique are a positive development, it is unlikely any agreement could have been reached without the presence at the meeting of MONUC. End Comment.

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